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Letter dated 10 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I should like to inform you that towards the end of 2000 the Government of the Republic of Iraq requested the World Health Organization (WHO) to send a team of its specialists to Iraq to study the impact on health and the environment of the frequent use by the United States and the United Kingdom of depleted-uranium munitions during their military aggression against Iraq in 1991, the catastrophic effects of their use on man and the environment in the country, including a sharp increase in cases of cancer and congenital deformities, having come to light over the past 10 years.

WHO acceded to this request and sent a mission to Baghdad in January 2001 to discuss the matter with the Iraqi side. Agreement was reached that a team of specialists from the Iraqi Ministry of Health should visit WHO headquarters in Geneva to formulate an action plan for the conduct of various studies to establish a causal link between depleted-uranium munitions and the various cancers and birth defects whose incidence in Iraq had increased alarmingly subsequent to their use.

A delegation from the Iraqi Ministry of Health visited Geneva from 9 to 12 April 2001 and reached agreement with WHO on a course of action involving cooperation between the Ministry and WHO in conducting studies on the impact of depleted-uranium munitions. The visit of the WHO team to Iraq to put the final touches to the agreement was scheduled for the end of June 2001, and towards the end of that month WHO addressed a letter to the Iraqi Ministry of Health informing it that the mission would visit Iraq between 30 June and 6 July 2001 and giving the names of the members of the WHO team.

As the Iraqi side was preparing to receive the WHO mission, on 3 July 2001 WHO addressed the attached letter (see annex) to the Iraqi Ministry of Health informing it that the mission would be unable to come to Iraq because WHO had failed to obtain the relevant security clearances from the United Nations.

We were greatly surprised that the United Nations security coordinator should postpone this important visit for security reasons when the same official has given open clearances to huge numbers of international personnel to come to Iraq to work for the oil-for-food programme. There are more than 890 international staff members working in Iraq for the oil-for-food programme, and some of them have no qualifications and some have been sent to make money or because they are the friends of some United Nations official or other. Some of those sent under cover of

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the oil-for-food programme, moreover, engage in activities that are prejudicial to Iraq's security.

The decision by the United Nations Secretariat to postpone this visit for security reasons is just another indication of procrastination and bad faith on the part of those in the Secretariat who submit to United States hegemony when it is a matter of taking serious steps to do justice to Iraq and halt the suffering caused to its people by the embargo and by aggression.

The visit of the WHO team to Iraq is of major importance not only to Iraq, which is suffering from the catastrophic consequences of the use of depleted-uranium munitions, but also for the countries of the region. They are also facing imminent danger to their environment and population, especially those in or near whose territory are to be found remnants of armour destroyed by depleted-uranium projectiles. Account should also be taken of the fact that the impact will persist for generations to come if contamination is not eliminated and the environment in Iraq and the countries of the region is not cleansed of the remnants of this hazardous radiological weapon. This matter is also one of importance for the world as a whole, particularly since this weapon has been used again in Yugoslavia and against the people of Palestine.

We seek your urgent intervention and request that the WHO mission should be permitted to visit Iraq as soon as possible to implement its agreed mandate.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mohammed A. **Al-Douri**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 10 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

This is to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your invitation, addressed on 20 June 2001 to the Director-General's Office, for a team from the World Health Organization (WHO) to visit Iraq in order to finalize project proposals for activities inserted in the framework for collaboration between WHO and Iraq agreed upon during our joint April meeting in Geneva.

As you have been informed through the WHO Representative in Baghdad, we had already undertaken the preparatory work to send the mission by the end of June 2001. Unfortunately, we have been held back by the lack of the necessary United Nations security clearances to visit Baghdad. As soon as this problem is resolved we can establish the dates for the mission.

The World Health Organization is eager to progress this joint activity, and is pleased to report that the equipment requested by the Minister of Health in his letter of 3 March 2001 for the needs of early detection of breast cancers has been processed after obtaining the clearance of the 661 Committee. We hope that these items will be reaching Iraq in the course of this month. In the same way the list requesting technical support and equipment which was hand-delivered by H.E. the Minister of Health during the World Health Assembly has been costed and will be transmitted to the United Nations in New York for the usual procedures.

With respect to the forthcoming WHO mission to Baghdad, and while waiting for the necessary security clearances to permit determination of new dates for the mission, we would like to receive the various project proposals in their draft form, as prepared by the Iraqi specialists, so that we can start immediately working on them, and adjusting the composition of the mission participants if necessary. It would be also helpful to receive a draft agenda for the visit and an indication on the composition of the Iraqi delegation that will work with the WHO mission on the project proposals.

Executive Director
Sustainable Development and Health Environments